

# How to Use the Information in Population Register in Statistics and in Other Sectors of the Society

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## **Introduction**

Every society needs information on its members to carry out its basic functions. The population register systems in Finland as well as in other Nordic countries (Denmark, Iceland, Norway and Sweden) are technically advanced. The high quality is guaranteed by technical solutions, long traditions and the requirements set by the Nordic welfare states to the basic registers of the society.

The Finnish population information system is a basic administrative register. Because of advanced data-processing technology it offers a flexible data system service to the whole public sector. The information is widely used by Statistics Finland, which makes the essential personal statistics with the help of the data received regularly from the population information system. Lately, more and more attention is being paid also to services to the private sector. In that process a lot of attention is paid to the data protection.

## **A short history**

In Finland the population information system has been collecting the information for society since the 16<sup>th</sup> century when Finland was part of the Kingdom of Sweden-Finland. The system was started at the same time by both Church and the State. The information was needed for both taxation purposes and the army. Up to the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the population register was maintained by making the necessary entries in lists, or books. The entries were made by hand. In the 1960s the lists were replaced by card files.

The registration entered the computer era in 1970 when the nationwide Central Population Register was established. Data on buildings and dwellings has been collected since the beginning of the 1980s. In 1983 and 1999 the technical solutions have been totally reformed. Today the system is a relative-data-based real-time system.

## **Information contents, the quality and the sources**

The population information system contains the official information for the whole country on Finnish citizens and aliens residing permanently in Finland and on buildings and dwellings. The system further contains information on real estate units.

The information on people covers e.g. name and personal identity code, municipality of residence and postal address, nationality, mother tongue and information on marriages, children and parents. The most important data in the system are the personal identity codes and the addresses.

The quality of the information is quite high. In a reliable survey made by Statistics Finland the quality of address information is 98,5 %. We have estimated that the quality of other personal data is even higher.

The information in the system is mostly received from authorities. The information on addresses is received from the private citizens. It is compulsory for the authorities and the citizens to give the correct information to the system.

A traditional way to send the information is to use forms. Today more and more information is sent in an electronic form. For example about 40 % of the personal information is sent by authorities in an electronic form using data line connections. The private citizens can also use telephone and a secure internet connection when sending the address information.

Services to all society